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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 DAMASCUS 003806

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PREF PHUM LE SY

SUBJECT: TFLE01: SYRIA DAILY SITREP 15 FOR WEDNESDAY,
AUGUST 2, 2006

REF: DAM 01187

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Michael H. Corbin for reasons 1.4 b/d

11. (U) Summary: Syria's President Asad was expected to meet visiting Spanish FM Moratinos August 2 in Damascus, according to Arabic regional media. Germany's FM linked Syrian cooperation in ending fighting between Israel and Hizballah to closer relations with the European Union, including improved economic or scientific ties, according to the Associated Press. Syria's Information Minister met August 1 in Rome with the Italian PM, according to the official Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA). President Asad met visiting Iranian FM Manouchehr Mottaki August 1 in Damascus, reviewing Mottaki's talks with Lebanese officials and the French FM in Beirut, SANA reported. The Consular Section's American Citizen Services unit had 85 walk-in requests for assistance on August 1, up from 65 the previous day. End Summary.

POLITICAL/MILITARY

12. (U) The following are political updates:

-- Visiting Spanish FM Miguel Angel Moratinos was expected to meet with Syrian President Bashar al-Asad and FM Walid Mu'allim August 2, in one of the first trips to Syria by a high-level Western official since the assassination of former Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri, according to Arabic regional media. (Note: Moratinos met with FM Mu'allim in March during a "refueling stop" at the Damascus Airport, as reported reftel.)

-- German FM Frank-Walter Steinmeier called on all key Middle East players, including Syria, to end fighting between Israel and Hizballah, according to an Associated Press account of the FM's interview with a German newspaper. Steinmeier said he was in contact with leaders in Damascus, and that he had not linked an end to the fighting with the resolution of Syria's dispute with Israel over the Golan. Steinmeier did say a cooperative SARG could expect closer relations with the European Union, including improved economic or scientific ties, according to the AP.

-- President Asad met with visiting Iranian FM Manouchehr Mottaki August 1 in Damascus, according to SANA. Mottaki reviewed his talks with Lebanese officials and the French FM in Beirut. This is the fourth high-level visit by an Iranian official to Damascus since the fighting began in Lebanon.

-- Syrian Information Minister Mohsen Bilal met August 1 in Rome with the Italian PM Romano Prodi to discuss the

Israel-Hizballah conflict, according to SANA. Bilal emphasized the importance of reviving the peace process, including the need to restore the Golan to Syria, SANA reported.

-- Lebanese FM Fawzi Salloukh said during an August 1 stop in Syria that Lebanon would reject any attempt to impose a UN resolution seeking to halt the Israel-Hizballah conflict, according to regional media. Salloukh said Lebanon was coordinating with Syria "to make the world take notice of the Arab position," according to press reports. Salloukh stopped in Syria en route to a meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Malaysia and was to travel to the conference with Syria's Deputy FM Faisal Mikdad, according to regional media.

13. (S) The following are military updates:

-- The Defense Attach reported August 1 that Syrian military units were dispersed in or near garrison areas but far enough away to survive an Israeli strike against known, normal locations. NATO Attaches in Syria agreed during an August 1 meeting that the Syrian military had not made any provocative moves and remained at high alert, with units seeking to enhance their chances of survivability.

CONSULAR

14. (U) The following are consular updates:

-- The ACS unit had 85 walk-ins requesting assistance on August 1, up from 65 the previous day. Demand for emergency passports continued, contributing to a sense that

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Syrian-Americans are planning for contingencies.

ECONOMIC

15. (U) The following are economic updates:

-- The Damascus Chamber of Commerce has taken charge of running the Zabadani Youth Camp, which is hosting about 2,000 Lebanese displaced by the Israel-Hizballah conflict, and, as part of its effort, it has asked merchants to contribute assistance, according to local media.

-- Separately, the National Day for the Support of the Lebanese on July 31 raised the following: in Aleppo about USD 1.9 million; in Tartous USD 385,000; in Quneitra USD 33,7000 in cash and food; and in al-Tharwa in northeastern Raqqa about USD 19,200, according to local press.

CORBIN